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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Slate Valley Expands Telemedicine School Health Program

Fair Haven, VT, October – The Slate Valley Unified Union School District (SVUUSD) and Community Health Centers of the Rutland Region (CHCRR) are excited to announce the expansion of the Telemedicine School Health Program from Fair Haven Grade School (FHGS) to Fair Haven Union High School (FHUHS) with plans to eventually extend the program to all schools in the district.

"We are off to a great start this year at FHGS, having completed a number of telemedicine visits with our brand new and enhanced equipment," said Dr. Schneider, Associate Medical Director and Telehealth Program Leader, CHCRR. "We have equipment on order and are looking forward to expansion of the program to more SVUUSD schools."

School-based telemedicine is an innovative, established model used to complement and expand existing school health services. Under the telemedicine program, school nurses are able to consult with CHCRR medical professionals. This makes healthcare more accessible and convenient and results in fewer absences and delays in treatment. Parents/guardians do not need to be present for their child to be seen, however, they do need to sign and return a consent form for participation in the telemedicine program (available in the nurse's office).

"When it is determined by the school nurse that a student could benefit from a medical visit, with parent/guardian consent, CHCRR is contacted," said Dr. Schneider. "A pediatric provider, along with assistance from the school nurse as a tele-presenter, uses high-definition video and audio to allow for a thorough virtual evaluation and examination of the child, including the use of special cameras designed for vivid visualization of ears, throat and skin, and use of a digital stethoscope for auscultation of heart, lungs and abdomen."

Examples of conditions that may be treated include: abrasions and scrapes, asthma and wheezing, coughs and colds, earaches, fever, pinkeye, minor skin infections, and rashes. If the student requires a prescription, the healthcare provider is able to write one and send it electronically to the family's pharmacy.

While many conditions are treatable through the telemedicine program, there are medical conditions that may require an in-person evaluation by the child's regular physician. In these cases, the parent/guardian will be notified.

CHCRR services are provided, with parent/guardian consent, at no cost. The parent's/guardian's insurance company/Medicaid will be billed for the services provided in the telemedicine visit and fees exceeding coverage will be waived. If the parent/guardian does not have insurance, fees for the services provided will be waived. No child will be refused treatment due to inability to pay.

"Telemedicine visits often allow children to stay in school and parents to remain at work, while getting medical care," said Dr. Schneider. "Treatments can be started sooner, and there is decreased absenteeism. When indicated, follow-up visits can also be arranged to take place by telemedicine. We are in the process of expanding the program to include further services, including dental care, behavioral health, and follow-up monitoring and medical checks for children with chronic conditions such as asthma or ADHD."

The school-based telemedicine clinics are open during the regular school day.

"From the school district perspective, this is another exciting resource that students are able to access as we further our vision of providing for the social, emotional, and academic needs of every child," said Superintendent Brooke Olsen-Farrell. "This program allows the district to keep children in school so their academic needs can be better met while at the same time attending to their health and well-being."

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